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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(Washington) – The following is a statement by Rep. Luis V. Gutierrez (D-IL), Chair of the Immigration Task Force of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, a Member of the Judiciary Committee, and chief author of H.R. 4321, The Comprehensive Immigration Reform for America's Security Act (CIR ASAP), which was introduced in the House in December 2009 and has 96 co-sponsors.

I am pleased to see Majority Leader Harry Reid, Sen. Chuck Schumer, and Sen. Robert Menendez taking the lead and preparing a bill for introduction. The details matter and I am anxious to see them, but the most important thing to me is the forward progress.

The issue of immigration is one of the most complex and politically difficult issues because there is so much passion on all sides. It literally goes to the very heart of what it means to be an American and so I praise the leadership we are seeing in the Senate and I respect their courage.

Right now, we need to roll up our sleeves and get to work on solving the difficult problems of our broken immigration system. We are running out of time to have a bill introduced, debated, and passed in the Senate, sent over to the House for further action, and to complete the process by sending a bill to the President's desk. The policy details matter, but at this point, concrete steps in the process of passing a bill matter much, much more and the details will become clearer when a bill is introduced.

The Democrats need to make it crystal clear where we stand on comprehensive immigration reform. We should clearly articulate our approach, make it unmistakable that we are serious and sincere in our effort to pass a bill, and invite the Republicans to join us at the table we have set. Then, if no Republicans come forward, we will know whether they are serious about solving problems, standing up for what they believe in, or caving in to the lowest common denominator anti-immigration politics of some in their base.

In the Senate, as in the House, the Democrats will provide 90 percent of the votes for immigration reform and we will need 10 percent of the votes to come from the other side of the aisle. Whatever happens, we need the President to step up his effort to move legislation forward and we need his full court press to get a result.

For myself, I know I am going to keep the pressure up on the White House, on the Leadership in my Party, and on the Members across the aisle. We need to get a bill passed this year. If we lose hope or lose momentum or lose sight of our goal, disasters like the Arizona bill are the result. We cannot afford to let the American people down and we cannot afford to allow the continued assault on immigrant families that we are seeing from coast to coast.

Ironically, the actions of Republicans in Arizona have lit a fire in immigrant and Latino neighborhoods and have galvanized national support for a serious immigration overhaul. We have been flirting with immigration reform for years, but I think if we keep the pressure up in this political year, we can enact reform that respects working people, reunites families, secures the border, and ends illegal immigration.

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